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## MAGAZINE WRITING AND LITERATURE.

BY HENRY MILLS ALDEN, EDITOR OF "HARPER'S MAGAZINE."

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IN the criticism of contemporary literature, not only our own contemporary literature but that of previous ages, there has always been a tendency on the part of academically trained critics to disparage the present as compared with the past. This tendency discloses the vice as well as the virtue of that conservatism which has the long view backward but the limited view of the present and future, and which, while it holds to the established best, ignores the best that is in the making.

As a corrective, we need for literature such a plea as Professor Lounsbury is in the habit of interposing for language—a protest against the purist and an apology for legitimate freedom and flexibility. Professor Lounsbury's defence of new locutions should find, for a proper adjustment of our critical view, a counterpart in some equally effective justification of new literary styles, in so far as these stand for new attitudes of the human intelligence and sensibility toward life and the world.

Our judgment is not merely a matter of orientation—the turn of our thought backward through well-worn channels to familiar traits and canons which have the sanctions of classical authority. We incur the peril of a vast ignorance if, in our regard for the continuity of human culture, we confine ourselves to a retrospective view, and disregard, or court only for our amusement, the novel phenomena which constantly present themselves in the field of literature and which seem, in our conventional view, "sports of nature" and violently reactionary. So a follower of the Hesiod cult might have regarded the invasion of the Homeric influence, which turned out to be the inspiration of what was best in Hellenic art and literature. So Doctor Johnson must have looked upon the swelling current of romanticism

which swept away the artificial decorations and conventions of two generations of English classicism.

We of the East, accustomed from the beginning to look across the Atlantic for our models and inspirations, have given too little heed to the development of the new spirit in the West, excepting as it has been embodied in the personality of a statesman like Lincoln or of a humorist like Mark Twain. That way lies for us the freshly unveiled Pacific, our dream of Empire, and the magnificent realization of material grandeur and enterprise—a realm of vast adventure which for more than fifty years has been invested with the golden glamour of Argonautic romance. We have felt all this, but we have failed to comprehend the mental attitude of the people who have accomplished these material results—an attitude developed in the light and shadow, and under the stimulus and oppressiveness, of such achievement.

Therefore the sympathetic and luminous exposition which Professor Henry Loomis Nelson has recently given us of the Middle West has arrested general attention, as a novel disclosure of character and conditions. He has brought within his consideration not only the Middle West but what, in a very original discrimination, he calls the Eastern West and the Western West. These papers of Professor Nelson, in themselves excellent examples of a new kind of interpretation which, in the natural course of progressive development in magazine writing, has become possible, taken in connection with Mrs. Elia W. Peattie's brilliant studies of literature and society in the same region, show us to what an extent the strenuous men of the West are absorbed in schemes of mechanical progress and commercial expansion, while social and intellectual culture is established and maintained by the women. It appears, too, that, as the men admire those intellectual functions which they have no time for, so the women take peculiar pride in the splendid material achievements of their husbands and brothers, and seek to rival these in the field so wholly committed to their charge—to do as striking things in society and literature as the men are doing in bridge-building, in sky-scraping architecture, in gigantic business combinations.

This was not the case thirty years ago on the Pacific Coast, though it is so to-day. There and then it was from men that we heard the note of an original departure both in literature and art, and we had the reward of our listening. How distinct was the

local color and flavor of the Pacific literature of that period! Now the conditions are much the same as in the Middle West, save that there is on the part of the predominant women greater tension of sensibility and mental activity.

What is now in evidence in this Western field is an immense and eager audience—eager for some things, and as firm in its protest against other things. What is its attitude? This, surely, is an interesting inquiry. The audience is the determining factor in the making of a literature; its demands are imperative. The West has been postulant from the beginning, and its present intellectual requirements have an importance in the shaping of our literature equal to that of its earlier economical demands in shaping the internal policy of our government.

What is the kind of literature that the West wants, and against what does this great audience forever utter its protest? The inquiry is the more pertinent because our new writers are called upon to choose between old and new methods of appeal. The question can never be whether the writer should abandon established standards of literary taste. Such a question is not pertinent to our inquiry. No cultivated American audience, East, South, or West, advocates, much less demands, a lower literary art. Nor is the new writer's choice one between listening to the voice of England's Poet Laureate, Alfred Austin, on the one hand, calling him back to very old and formal ways—over a century old—and, on the other, to the voice of Gertrude Atherton in her recent protest against what she calls a bourgeois literature.

Alfred Austin does not fairly represent the cause of fidelity to the continuity of culture; else he would not have with so easy agility, involving an implication of contempt, overleaped the entire and mightily vital Victorian era, to find the worthiest examples both of good writing and of an intellectual audience. Nor does Mrs. Atherton in any fair sense voice the demand made by intelligent Western readers, or their protest. She does not attempt to do this; she speaks only for herself and for those who agree with her as to what our literature should and should not be. She rests with a good conscience, since in her last novel, "The Rulers of Kings," she has done her part, furnishing a splendid example of the kind of fiction she favors, and the success of her book sets upon it the stamp of approval of a large and respectable class of readers. We can easily understand that the women of

Chicago, St. Louis and San Francisco see in this novel a realization of their fond expectation in one respect at least—in that it is a production in literature as striking and wonderful as the most magnificent monument of modern masculine enterprise. Yet it can hardly be said to adequately and exactly respond to the expectations of that Western culture which has been developing during the last two generations—expectations so just and reasonable as to be worthy not only of the respect but of the careful consideration of all lovers of good literature.

Those of us who, during the period mentioned, have given close attention to the course of books, with reference to their appreciation in different sections of the country, remember that any literary work of exceptional value, whether as a manifestation of genius or as a novel disclosure of spiritual truth, whatever its reception elsewhere, has always been sure of a hearty response from beyond the Rockies, where was the nucleus of the early growth of culture in the West. The people who migrated from New England carried with them to their new homes their intellectual tastes and habits, building churches and schools and colleges, and establishing newspapers; and while the South cherished local independence almost to the point of exclusiveness, owing to its peculiar institution, the West long cherished a feeling of dependence, beseeching means of easy communication with Eastern centres, that it might not be cut off from the currents of the old-home and the Old-World culture. The demand of this people, adventurous but unwillingly remote, for good literature afforded an eager market for books; and the one periodical that in those early days had a general circulation instinctively adapted itself to meet the far-off need for such educational aliment as schools and libraries could not furnish, and even gave from six to eight pages to a well organized Monthly Record of Current Events, while its fiction—always the best of the time—supplied the wants of the imagination, and its illustrated articles of travel brought the whole world to the mining-camp and the settler's cabin as well as to cultivated homes in comparatively isolated regions.

In the course of time has come the inevitable reaction; new currents of thought and feeling have been set in motion, arising from a new kind of civilization which is not merely a reflection of the old, and whose peculiar traits indeed are more accentuated now that it is in full communication with the world than in its earlier

isolation. Opposition has been generated by a kind of induction. These peculiar traits are the result really of a slow and unconscious development and are intimate and subjective as distinguished from external peculiarities of tone, manner and speech. They indicate modes of thought and feeling—the psychical attitude. If we were to express this attitude in positive terms, we should speak of it as vital, tense, and intuitively direct—just what we would expect of a culture which has come to follow the lead of feminine inspiration. *Dux femina facti*; and this leadership, it must be admitted, is reinforced by the inspiration of all the great masters in the whole line of human culture. Very much of the energy engaged in this development is exhausted in social activities and for practical ends; it certainly does not as yet produce many eminent authors, and the immediate atmosphere—the overpowering material environment—is not conducive to great authorship, though by reaction the psychical sensibility is deepened, the result of which is an audience of distinguished readers whose attitude toward literature must have a profound influence in shaping and directing it.

We find it easier, therefore, to give an idea of the traits of this femininely conducted, though by no means effeminate, Western culture in somewhat negative terms. Open to all currents of the world's past and present thought and, as we have said, reinforced by them, it reacts upon them as it does upon its own immediate environment. As, in the latter case, the psychical rises to oppose the material, so against all the influences of the world's culture is developed an impatience of the traditional and conventional forms through which these influences offer their values. The values are appreciated but the forms are repudiated—especially such old forms as seem the ceremonies rather than the fresh and natural investiture of present and living thought.

This, in the main, is the protest, and it is a note more worth heeding than that of the Poet Laureate. It is not a protest against art but against artifice. Of course we are considering the demands made by a cultivated audience, which, while it lays little stress upon what Mrs. Meynell calls “the trick of education,” does especially insist upon training, upon a thorough intellectual equipment as essential to authorship. In the West, as everywhere else, there is an outlying audience, clamoring for its own kind of satisfaction and getting it abundantly. The audience I have in

view, though cultivated, is distinctly bourgeois and proudly calls itself middle-class; but it is the kind of middle-class which is produced by democracy in conditions which have freed it from the trammels of tradition and the masks of hypocrisy; it is non-conformist, not whiningly or fanatically, but instinctively, by an almost unconsciously developed attitude—an earnest psychical attitude which more intently regards the theme than any form of premeditated art in which the theme is expressed.

The feminization of culture is not exclusively a peculiarity of the West, or even of America; it is a characteristic of our period, of the stage which we have reached in our civilization. Democracy, too, has done its work in the East as well as in the West, though it has not destroyed so much wheat along with the tares. The fact that the leadership of Western culture is so exclusively feminine must in great measure account for its comparative sterility. Where this leadership is to a greater extent shared by both sexes and there is a considerable class of men not so absorbed in strenuous enterprise but that it has time to devote to art and literature, independently of social and practical considerations, there is naturally more fruitfulness in the higher field of creative work.

Some characteristic Western traits of an earlier period have disappeared. In the present situation there is no chance for the development of humor or for the existence of the mood and temperament from which humor spontaneously flows. How much might as well as mirth—all the masterly traits, indeed, of the creative spirit—must in the nature of things vanish from a realm of culture so exclusively dominated by women! Equally true it is that, by just as natural limitations, many of the traits which we most highly prize as indispensable in our modern world—not merely of daintiness and grace but of spiritual strength—would be wanting under exclusive masculine domination. Miss Austen inaugurated a new era when she entered the field as a writer of English fiction.

But there is no sterility like that of a feminized culture, unruffled by the masculine spirit, vexed to its depths only by its own feverish unrest. There is in it no sense of the morning, of the springtime or of any tokens of renascence. Mrs. Peattie confesses to this lack when she says: "If candor and splendor and truth are to come into American literature, they must come by way of immigrants from the nations of unabashed sentiment,

who, singing songs in this land, sing with their faces turned to the sun,—not toward a group of carping matrons sitting in conclave on all honest and free-spoken words.”

But is the estate of American literature really so low that even a Western writer should indulge in this far-reaching orientation, looking to the effete Old-World for its rejuvenescence?

I could not so effectively enter seriously upon the consideration of the theme indicated in the caption of this article as after repeating this cry from the wilderness, having first led up to it and given a significance to its location by what I have had to say about what has long been and must continue to be the largest constituency of American books and periodicals, about the importance of its demands in shaping the course of our literature, about the value of its protest, and about its peculiar culture—its advantages and its limitations.

But first I must let Mrs. Peattie's complaint conclude itself, since it furnishes her explanation of what is called “the deterioration of our literature.” “The matrons,” she says, “have killed the New England literature. They have edited the magazines, ruled the book-publishers, and broken the hearts of the poets. They will have an awful reckoning some day . . . when they shall stand and tremble before the Truth, and find all their proprieties an insufficient barrier!”

Well, it would seem that the day of judgment has already come; for magazine editors, indeed, it has been a year of judgment. For Mrs. Peattie only repeats what Mrs. Atherton has said before and what the casual correspondents of newspapers and even newspaper editors have without end reiterated. If Mrs. Peattie really meant to call magazine editors matrons—that might seem original, and perhaps to some of the group unpleasant, though, for one, I don't mind it; there is a kind of dignity in the title. But the context forbids this idea of a personal insinuation. She really refers to a very respectable class of women for whom I shall interpose no defence—they need none. If they have really done what Mrs. Peattie says they have done, their work seems to have been pretty effective, and I should leave them to their dreadful arraignment. In fact, however, they have done none of the things attributed to them. They have always been a very harmless, inoffensive kind of women, too busy with other things to edit magazines or to act as literary advisers to publishers. At least, in an experience of



more than forty years in association with a publishing-house, I have never known of any meddling on their part with the business, except in rare cases after the fact.

I have always understood that the publishers who issued "Jane Eyre" and "Adam Bede" did so without any previous consultation with matrons or any thought of them, leaving them to talk it over afterwards with the same fearless freedom. I never knew a publisher to reject a novel that was on its literary and dramatic merits worth publishing, except when it was indecent or was likely to have an actually immoral influence—the kind of thing which would have been as unpleasant reading to himself as to any reader, even a matron. "Trilby" was published not only as a book but as a magazine serial. It was not immoral, but it was unmoral—as unmoral as childhood is. Two or three matrons wrote protesting letters, but most of the few complaints made came from men. Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" was published serially in "Harper's Bazar," and his "Jude the Obscure" (under another title) in "Harper's Magazine." If publishers of books and magazines err in this matter, it is likely to be on the side of daring, not from adventurous intention but in unconscious innocence. They are not afraid to confront Truth—even with a capital T.

Indeed, it is this very Truth, with all the candor and splendor that attend it and all its inherent majesty, that the best literature of to-day in books and magazines confronts without tremor. This is as true of our literature as of our science. It is a direct and intimate attitude, and we frankly credit the West with having helped us to it. But it is the trait of our time, as well in the East as in the West, however we may have come by it. It indicates a distinct advance in our culture, which in literature brings us ever more and more face to face with the essential truths of life, just as in science it insists upon the closest scrutiny of physical phenomena. The supreme interest of the greatest fiction of our time is in its psychological interpretations and disclosures. This interest excludes no really vital theme, but only that false and shallow and even meretricious masquerade of human passions and sentiments which vitiated the fiction of a former age, and which no cultivated reader now tolerates. Even Zola is pathologically true, and has his proper place in the respect of readers who seek that kind of truth. In English and American fiction the writers

who have developed the psychical method—among whom Henry James stands both as the type and as first in the exemplification of the type—have kept within the limits of a normal exposition. The good and evil are inseparably mingled in our human life—our chief wonder being, as Mrs. Deland has said, the badness of people who are called good and the goodness of those who are called bad—so that the shadows have their place in the brightest picture, and they are not to be evaded by any shuffling. We willingly follow where the path inevitably leads—to see life as it is.

I do not say that everything which could be published with propriety in a book could fitly be published in a magazine. The purchaser chooses his book; the magazine goes to an audience to which it is committed by a pledge, in part explicit, but for the most part a matter of implicit understanding. But the limitation does not arise from an embarrassing moral constraint. That is scarcely felt; the editor is not consciously aware of it; his resistance is against weak, unworthy stuff. There are doubtless authors who revel in brutalities, who enjoy an infernal habitation not for its purgatorial fires but for its sulphurous airs, and who complain because they may not make their descents before a polite audience; but these things do not come within the scope of the demand of any species of human culture.

Every magazine in the course of its development establishes an expectation as to the field it will occupy and the kind of themes it will treat. Hence arises its principal limitation. Fifty years ago, a popular magazine intended for general circulation must have been educational in a sense that it need not be to-day. For a long time it must have treated themes now wholly relegated to special periodicals. One thing it never could have excluded—that is, the best current literature.

It is fortunate in the interests of a general culture and of literature especially that a great magazine to-day may have as its distinguishing limitation the exclusion of specialties, retaining only within its scope such scientific, historical and descriptive articles as are novel disclosures in their several fields. It may even avoid all timely or occasional topics, so adequately treated by the daily and weekly press, thus devoting nearly its entire space to what is known as the literature of power. The cultivated reader is so greatly the gainer by this that he will not complain, since whatever is omitted is easily accessible elsewhere, while he is not sure

of having the best current literature, or of having so much of it, in any other way.

The contributor sometimes complains of the exclusion of some things in favor of others where the editor cannot say, "these lie outside the scope of our magazine." There is a law of selection by comparison. Out of a score of good things perhaps but one is chosen, the one considered the best in the editor's judgment, and yet the magazine is filled from month to month with these chosen contributions. Had the others been accepted also, they would never see the light except as excluding better things. It may be that among those rejected some one thing is ideally beautiful—a prose-poem, perhaps, which would be a delightful satisfaction to a few readers, to whom either by itself or together with other things having the same rare quality it should come in the shape of a book, to be read at leisure, and not, as in a magazine, mingled with elements out of harmony with it, not pitched to the same far-off note. This may be the case of a poem, an essay, or a story. This is simply saying that for magazine use the near, and still more the intimate, note is preferred. Of two poems having equal poetic merit—one concerning some object in nature, a bird or a flower, and the other a direct appeal of a human theme to human sensibility—the latter would be chosen. Yet a creation of the highest order, like Shelley's "Ode to the Skylark," would be choice-compelling. It is true even of books that the large polite audience—that upon whose patronage our best magazines depend—demands the intimate human appeal, and books which do not have it reach only a select class of readers.

In our first-class magazines Nature sketches find a place, in due proportion, and in greater variety than ever before. The charge against these magazines, that they have given up their space mainly to fiction and fail to meet the wants of readers in other directions, is made perhaps without due examination. New disclosures of physical phenomena; luminous interpretations of history; revisions of old and mistaken views based upon freshly discovered material; the most recent revelations of archaeological exploration; the result of current sociological experimentation; studies of tendencies characteristic of the civilization of to-day and of imperfectly understood conditions of civilization in earlier times; studies also which are the result of travel and observation among peoples never before heard from and of the re-

action of a creative imagination upon material which seemed familiar, but which for the first time yields to a new interpretation its inmost secrets—affording a fresh field of wonder; narrations of singular adventure: all this from writers the most authoritative, where first-hand authority is essential, and, as to those themes whose treatment depends for its interest upon genius, by writers acknowledged to be of the first rank, wholly apart from their contributions to magazines. In this summation of features I am not considering a magazine's contents taking a whole year into the view; a single number will contain something of nearly all this varied entertainment. The articles will not be elaborate, as in a Review, but concisely comprehensive, suggestive and illuminative; they are just what cultivated readers want.

There would not be so much fiction given in a magazine were it not true that in novels and short stories the life of this and other times has its most faithful portraiture, so that they stand for many an essay and article.

If I am all along confessing to certain limitations of the magazine, it is not unwillingly. I desire to confess frankly that in literature the book and not the magazine is the supreme thing. In some ways the magazine conveys books to its readers, in serial fiction and in series of short stories and sketches and important articles—books which are among the best of their time. But, outside of fiction, the great books of all time stand by themselves in a world where the magazine is not. The exaltation of this world is in the matter of themes. So far as quality is concerned, the isolation does not exist. Though I have admitted that some things ideally beautiful, but appealing to a few select readers, are excluded from magazines, the exclusion is because of their themes, not because of their excellence. There are magazines and magazines, of course, and a large number of them are addressed to that outlying audience of which I have said that it has no intimate relation to the best culture of our time; and while some of these periodicals like to be, and in many ways are, interesting to very thoughtful readers, they could not depend upon these for their extensive patronage. But the magazine whose constituency is limited to a cultivated audience, one which is constantly increasing with the steady advance of culture, cannot meet the demands of that audience by the adoption of any standard lower than the best. It cannot seek writers whose sole

aim is popularity or those who have achieved only that. It must have the best current literature obtainable and therefore the greatest writers of the time, and it gets these writers. The greatest novel of the year is being published serially in one magazine of this class. Who are the greatest writers of short stories and poems? It is these whose work is appearing in our magazines from month to month. Their first encouragement came from magazines. Liberal remuneration for their contributions has made it possible for many of them to persevere in literary work, and the work itself is better than that of any former period in the history of periodical literature. But, excellent as it is, this demand of the audience and therefore of the magazines is always for something better.

This is a sufficient answer to those who hold magazine editors responsible for "the deterioration of literature." The complaints made are contradictory, one to another. Some critics, who have given very little attention to the real character of magazine literature, assert that contributors in order to succeed must "write down" to it. The main complaint, in which many writers join, is that they are required to "write up" to it. This complaint has reference even more to themes that are excluded than to requirements as to style, though the one point usually implies the other. It is objected that the magazine editor "wants better bread than can be made of wheat," that he sets himself up as a "ruler of literature," trampling upon every spark of genius and repudiating all that is primal and elemental, and that he is especially shocked by the expression of "unabashed sentiment."

Everything in its place and time commands respect. Crudeness precedes development in all evolution. But it would be unjust to treat the complaint as a plea for crudeness. Much as it sometimes seems like it, it is not meant to be that. If we allow the complainant to state his own case, he would say that instead of favoring retrogression—a reversion to a lower order of development—he stands as the advocate of those reactions which especially characterize the most advanced stages of human civilization. The plant or the animal developed into new varieties by artificial selection, if again left to itself, reverts to its original type, and this might properly be called degeneration. But in human development the progress involves a series of reactions, peculiar to a rational consciousness, which is itself due to the breaking of

vital currents, and which gains in stability with the increased complexity of the brokenness. All nature has this divided living, and the division is multiplication; but in man it has a peculiar significance because it is a psychical process, involving reflection which gives him the choosing will, so that in his progress he does not always go straight on in inevitable courses, but turns upon himself at will and, in spiral fashion, goes forward half of the time by going backward. Thus the call for the primal and elemental is forever recurrent, in each downward course of the spiral ascent.

This is all true and strictly philosophical. Man goes back upon himself in a way that Nature does not—except at vast intervals when she also declares, “I care for nothing, all shall go.” This proclamation man—the most tropic of all beings—makes often in quick reactions and revolutions. His spirit builds for itself a complex edifice full of life and light in which for a time it rejoices; then it cherishes it for itself, and as the surfaces harden it delights in giving them the polish they are ready to take; it refines all outward means of expression, reveling in forms of exquisite grace and measure, and multiplying the conceits and caprices of its architecture. Then the windows grow dull; there is death at the extremities where life has exhausted itself in accomplishments that now turn to vanities; the spirit, burdened by what seemed its weight of glory, is lulled to sleep by its muffled music. This is the course of every age, and at every fresh awakening of the human spirit the mortal coil of the formal structure is shuffled off, and in the rude light of the new morning, as in “the freshness of the early world,” men are with the gods again, who are so poor that their gifts are only of raw material. What wonder that, when refinements become glosses and all our vesture a masquerade, we long for that primal poverty!

But the plea for the elemental in literature does not seem quite justified, since we already have had so much of it, the literary pendulum having so long swung that way. More than a century ago the reaction began against the perruque and pirouette in literary pantomime and all the artificialities of Queen Anne’s time; it has been going on ever since, and it has gone so far, that, by an opposite reaction, many look with a kind of envy to the formal graces of that remote period which have for them the fascination of the eighteenth-century minuet.

We in America have had our Walt Whitman, and if there is any variety of "unabashed sentiment" with which the fiction of the last twenty years has not made us acquainted, we are willing to forego further knowledge of it.

In good and bad literature—in that which appeals to the cultivated and that which panders to a lower taste—this reaction has done its best and worst for us. I do not mean to say that it has run its course, and that it has no new glories to disclose. Our attitude toward the mightiest realities of life, the most elemental truths, is more direct and intimate than ever before; and it is so in magazines as well as in books. The magazine editor has cherished rather than resisted it, and he expects of it, if nothing better than it has already yielded, yet a new revelation of its possibilities. It is true that he favors the most artistic—that is, the most developed—expression of intimate truths, for the characteristic trait of a period is sure not only to determine the writer's theme but to shape his style. Elemental truths may be conveyed more effectively in the exquisite art of Meredith, James, Hardy, Howells, Hewlett, and Mrs. Humphry Ward, than in the uncouth forms which, because of their crudeness, may seem to some especially suited to their expression.

Nevertheless, the editors of our best magazines do not reject the contributions of the less developed writer who promises great things to come—great in rare art as well as in rare insight. Those writers now proclaimed the greatest were in their lesser day diligently fostered by these magazines.

The most unjust and, even on the part of those who ought to know better, the most prevalent complaint is that magazine editors suppress individuality, either by its entire exclusion or by its corruption through the imposed obligation to accommodate itself to editorial requirements. On the contrary, it is individuality that the wise editor most eagerly looks for and most sedulously cultivates. Apart from the wholly worthless stuff offered, more contributions are rejected because their writers have made a point of accommodation than for any other reason. It is only as a writer expresses himself, utters his own note, that he has any value. He may see that work in a field which he likes is hospitably entertained by editors and be very properly encouraged to write in the line of his own genius, but if he does over again what has already been done or something nearly resembling it, his contri-

bution is not wanted. Most useless is his offering when he laboriously cultivates a style or selects a theme which seems to him, or which he has been led to believe, especially suited to magazines. The most obviously "magazinish" thing is the most unmagazinable. Any attempt toward accommodation injures the contributor's chance of success.

There are limitations which the contributor does well to regard, but they are negative. Magazines intended for general circulation must of course exclude politics and theology. A magazine of this class must avoid the article too general in its treatment or too elaborate, also the article too special or too technical, assuming an audience devoted to a particular field; that is, it must not be distinctively an art, a historical, or even a literary magazine. These magazines differ, one from another, in their limitations. Some favor and some exclude the timely topic. But all must have variety, and this necessity imposes a limitation as to the length of individual contributions, though each of these, whether an article or a story, must have a scope adequate to the satisfaction of thoughtful readers, even at the sacrifice of variety.

As to quality, however, there is no limitation which excludes the highest excellence. As I have said, the book is the supreme thing; but not only does the magazine avail of this supreme value in its serial fiction, but in all its varied contents it demands, as to quality, the excellence which gives the best book its supremacy, and which so many books lack. A single number of a first-class magazine, though it fully serves the purpose for which it was created, and in its scope and quality gives satisfaction, may seem to the critic, though not a miscellany, still, at the best, a fragmentary collection; but taking the numbers, *seriatim*, as the reader takes them, for a year, for a generation, they furnish a unique illustration of the progress of literature and, if illustrated, of art—a progress which the magazine has stimulated as well as exemplified.

The intimate relation of the periodical publications of a country to its literature has existed for more than two centuries. The earliest periodicals were guides to literature, and were almost technically bibliographical, intended of course for a select audience. The coffee-house periodical of the eighteenth century, of which "The Spectator," "The Tatler" and "The Rambler" were



characteristic types, was addressed to the "town" and consisted of graceful essays on literary and social topics, contributed by the "wits of the town," like Addison, Steele and Johnson; and these contributions are a part of English classical literature. Later, "The Gentleman's Magazine"—the first to seek a general audience—and "Blackwood's," engaged the most brilliant as well as the most learned writers of the day. The monthly magazines which followed these in rapid succession—"Temple Bar," "The Cornhill," "Colburn's," "Bentley's Miscellany," and the rest, maintained a literary reputation equal to that of the best current literature. So it has been in America. Of all that is important in our literature the span is so short as not to transcend the immediate observation of men now living, but from the first, and in the whole course of its development, the magazine has been eminently participant of such glory as it has shown. Poe wrote first for magazines his best stories, his best poems, his best literary criticism; and ever since his time, with rare exceptions, our great writers, both before and after the establishment of their reputations, have been inseparably associated with our periodical literature and have received from it their principal emolument.

The catholicity of magazines and their hospitality to young writers have done more than all other influences to build up our literature.

Always we revert to the audience, which is the determining factor in all literature. Whatever that is most creditable may be said of our best magazines reflects credit upon the culture of that audience, whose demands are not less exacting than its response is quick and generous. The whole country makes up this audience of to-day, and whatever the diverse demands of different sections, these are equally worthy of respect and represent values which will be more evident for what they really are when distinct currents shall have fully reacted upon each other and blended into that harmony which shall characterize the American audience of the future.

HENRY MILLS ALDEN.